



Northern Great Plains Network

Inventory and Monitoring Monthly Report

September 2005



Vital Signs Workshop: The Vital Signs workshop in Rapid City on September 14-15 was a success. On the 14th approximately 40 outside experts and partners reviewed and scored 120 potential Vital Signs. On the 15th the Technical Committee tentatively identified a subset of Vital Signs that should be monitored by all or most parks in the Network. The next step in the process is for parks to identify their highest priorities that did not make the Network-wide list. Over the next few months the list of Network-wide Vital Signs and park-specific Vital Signs will be synthesized and repackaged into one formal list. The list will then be sent to the Washington Office along with background on the methods used to develop the list (i.e., Chapter 3 of the monitoring plan). The database used to score the Vital Signs can be downloaded from:

<http://www1.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ngpn/Pages/monitoring.htm>

Budget: As late as September 19 we were all assured that the Northern Great Plains I&M Network would be getting full funding in FY06. Well it turns out that is not the case—we will not be getting full funding (at least that's the word as of September 28). This puts us two years behind the original funding schedule. Unfortunately, it is unclear at this time as to what level of funding we will be getting. If it's a repeat of the \$306k we got in FY05 then many of the items that were planned for FY06 will have to be deferred. Examples include the hiring of the Plant Ecologist, Aquatic Ecologist, and Administrative Assistant. Moving into a new office may also have to be deferred. We've already committed to the post-doc project with the University of Missouri so we may need to renegotiate that. Some planning workshops in regards to sampling design and protocols may have to be deferred. Existing personnel may also be affected. Hopefully things will get sorted out soon.

Natural Areas Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska: This year's Natural Areas Conference was held in Lincoln, Nebraska. The National Park Service, and specifically, the Northern Great Plains Network was well represented at the conference. Dan Licht gave a presentation on the I&M Program, Dr. Brian Smith gave a talk about the herpetofauna inventories, Jill Rust presented information from the water quality project, and Dr. Amy Symstad gave a presentation on the vegetation pilot study. Other presentations were given that the I&M Program has played a role in. For example, Dr. Josh Millspaugh gave a presentation on culling strategies for bison and elk. Dr. Amy Symstad gave a presentation on the effects of not grazing at Scotts Bluff NM. All of these were well done and well received.